DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 433 870 JC 990 584

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Lindholm, Jennifer |
| TITLE | Preparing Department Chairs for Their Leadership Roles. ERIC Digest. |
| INSTITUTION | ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges, Los Angeles, CA. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. |
| REPORT NO | EDO-JC-99-08 |
| PUB DATE | 1999-09-00 |
| NOTE | 4p. |
| CONTRACT | RR93002003 |
| PUB TYPE | ERIC Publications (071) -- ERIC Digests in Full Text (073) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Administrator Role; College Administration; College Faculty; *Community Colleges; *Department Heads; *Educational Change; *Leadership Responsibility; Training; Two Year Colleges |
| IDENTIFIERS | ERIC Digests; North Carolina State University |

ABSTRACT

The digest is drawn from "Preparing Department Chairs for Their Leadership Roles," a "New Directions for Community Colleges" volume. Two main issues regarding community college department chairs are discussed: role-related issues facing new department chairs, and training and development programs that aid in preparing administrators and chairs. Department chairs in the community college have multi-faceted responsibilities and play an instrumental role in nearly every aspect of the college community. These important positions require skilled managers, communicators, and leaders, especially in the coming years as community colleges face many rapid and challenging changes. New department chairs are often faced with demanding circumstances that require well-honed professional skills, although there has been little focus on training and development. Effective training programs should be designed to aid chairs in the transition to a complex role and facilitate solid professional practice. Three such examples are cited: the North Carolina State University (NCSU) Program, the Administrative Leadership Institute, and the Chair Academy. In order for community colleges to be successful in the future, it is essential that department chairs have the necessary skills. The college community must continue to redefine the understanding of leadership and extend awareness of the relationship between chair behavior and institutional success. (RDG)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED 433 870

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

■ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

□ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ERIC Digest
"Preparing Department Chairs
for their Leadership Roles"
EDO-JC-99-08
Lindholm, Jennifer

JC990584



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ERIC ® Clearinghouse for Community Colleges

University of California at Los Angeles
3051 Moore Hall
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1521
(310) 825-3931

Digest

September, 1999

EDO-JC-99-08

# Preparing Department Chairs for their Leadership Roles

Jennifer Lindholm

What role will community college department chairs play in the colleges of the 21st century? What types of training and development programs will best prepare them to meet the complex challenges and expectations that characteristically define their role? A community college department chair is responsible for many areas, including curricula and program review and modification; faculty issues such as hiring, development, and scheduling; student satisfaction with curriculum and faculty; student issues; and budget and planning analyses in departments, divisions, or programs. Additionally, chairs may serve as liaisons to staff, upper-level administration, and the community. This review of the articles presented in the *New Directions for Community Colleges* volume entitled *Preparing Department Chairs for Their Leadership Roles* provides an overview in two main areas: role-related issues confronting new department chairs in the community college; and training and development programs that will aid in preparing mid-level administrators to meet the forthcoming institutional challenges. Effective leadership at the department chair level will be critically important in the coming years because of the discontinuous nature of change. As Spangler suggests, rapid and radical change presents a threatening force to many community colleges, and by extension, their campus-based leaders. In order to continue with their historic mission, it is likely that community colleges will need stronger internal leadership than ever before (Spaid and Parsons).

JC 990584

## Academic Chairs: Multiple Roles, Multifaceted Challenges

Department chairs fulfill a unique niche within the institutional landscape of community colleges. They play an instrumental role in nearly every aspect of departmental life, and their actions and influence are typically felt beyond their individual departments. As Gillett-Karam suggests, chairs perhaps can be best defined metaphorically as the "glue" that binds together students, faculty, curriculum, and college. Their responsibilities are, indeed, very broadly defined. Pettitt, for example, identifies seven general categories of job tasks regularly attended to by academic chairs: (1) curriculum and instruction; (2) internal administration (e.g., coordination of communication and resources within department and between departments); (3) professional development; (4) human relations and personnel administration; (5) budget planning, development, and control; (6) student relations; and (7) external administration.

Chairs face the challenges and conflicts of "leading from the middle" and, as such, must be skilled communicators, mediators, and facilitators. In an analysis of chairs' self-perceptions and role definitions, Spaid and Parsons found that chairs view themselves as needing to be honest, to work well with others, and to learn from internal and external challenges. Chairs also view the tasks of listening, promoting teamwork, and breaking down communication barriers as critically important. New chairs, in particular, must learn to contend with three particularly difficult challenges associated with their administrative position: (1) learning how to balance loyalty to one's specific discipline with that to the institution; (2) developing appropriate and effective conflict resolution skills; and (3) understanding how to build effective teams (Filan).

The demanding, multifaceted role that these mid-level campus leaders fill is essential in ensuring effective day-to-day management of campus life. Despite their experience in overseeing daily operations and the generally high level of responsibility they hold for decision-making and action, more than three-fourths of community college chairs do not advance to high-level administrative positions (Gillett-Karam). Frequently, the attempts of those who do seek advancement are thwarted by limited structural opportunities. The nature of the role itself may also lead to high levels of burnout, particularly for those who are not well prepared to handle the inevitable demands of administration (Gillett-Karam et al).

A number of factors operate collectively to either facilitate or hinder a chair's transition into his or her new role. Skills and knowledge from prior professional experience have been found to be particularly valuable (Smith & Stewart). In addition, the new chair's approach to learning the specific demands of tasks, roles, and interpersonal relationships and his or her approach to handling unexpected elements of the new job play decidedly key roles in effective transition (Smith & Stewart). While much attention has been devoted to the personal characteristics and professional abilities that are associated with effective department chair leadership, there has been surprisingly little focus on training and development. Consequently, the learning process for chairs may be defined most accurately as largely informal (Filan, Smith, & Stewart).

## Training and Development Programs for a New Century

According to Spaid and Parsons, four key components define the ideal management style: adaptiveness, flexibility, responsiveness, and ethical sensitivity. They assert that in the coming century, community college chairs will need to be facilitators of organizational change, and focus on



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Matusek's (1997) framework of core values that will facilitate organizational prosperity in the new social context: (1) releasing human potential; (2) balancing individual and group needs; (3) defining and defending fundamental values through internal and external community; and (4) instilling and facilitating initiative and responsibility at all organizational levels.

How can community colleges continue to thrive and prosper within a new social context? One often-raised suggestion is the call for more structured and systematic leadership training. As Pettitt points out, the most effective training programs for chairs will focus not simply on generic skill development, but rather on skill development within the unique context of the community college environment, taking into account the culture and history of the chair's particular institution. Good training, Pettitt asserts, intimately involves the chair's reality. As such, he advocates the use of action-learning projects, reality-based case methods, and mentoring to tailor broad leadership development and training programs to the specific needs of the individuals who participate in them. Three examples of programs and organizations that foster department chair leadership through such training and development activities are the North Carolina State University (NCSU) Program, the Administrative Leadership Institute, and the Chair Academy.

The NCSU program models the collaborative approach to leadership that many believe will become the norm in the coming century. As Gillett-Karam describes, it is designed not only to broaden chairs' knowledge of their role but also to enhance their supervisory and management skills. Toward this end, the program emphasizes five areas of training: (1) leadership; (2) scholarship; (3) research and application; (4) teamwork and collaboration; and (5) skill development with an emphasis on the role of teamwork in creating and maintaining effective learning-centered institutions. Participants engage in case scenarios, examination of best practices, analysis and implementation of different leadership styles, and shadowing to hone their own knowledge and professional skill.

Similarly, the Administrative Leadership Institute was founded to provide opportunities for chairs to learn through interaction with their professional peers (Spangler). The Institute's programs are structured around the principles of collegiality, the responsibility of leadership, and the need for ongoing training and refreshment of skills. Specific foci on administrative concepts, applied knowledge, and so-called survival skills provide both a model for effective leadership and a support system for practitioners.

The Chair Academy is a multifaceted organization that holds international conferences that promote social and professional interaction for academic chairs (Filan). The Academy strives to create a more widespread base of training and support for chairs with innovations such as online leadership development course offerings, and broad-based succession and leadership development programs. In 1992, the Academy conducted the first comprehensive analysis of department chairs, surveying over 9,000 individuals who were currently employed as academic department chairs in the United States and Canada. The study focused not only on the characteristics of chairs and the dominant responsibilities of their positions, but also on unique role-related challenges and effective response strategies. Most importantly, the results provide a broad-based foundation for future research and development activities aimed at preparing and sustaining effective leaders in the department chair role.

**Conclusion**

Department chairs are called on to fulfill multiple roles. In order for community colleges to continue to thrive in the coming century, it will be essential for chairs to have the necessary skills to perform effectively in each of these diverse roles. As Yamasaki aptly suggests, it is perhaps time to endorse a conception of leadership at the department chair level that goes beyond the traditionally rigid "leader vs. manager" classification and to consider, instead, a new form of "managerial leadership." To date, researchers and practitioners have begun to identify some of the key challenges confronted by department chairs. Training and development programs have also been initiated to help aid chairs in their transition to this complex role, and to facilitate effective professional practice. Much of the research on leadership at the department chair level has focused on the personal characteristics that tend to be associated with effectiveness in such a role. To develop a more comprehensive understanding of how to promote both effective transition and sustained performance within this role, we must continue to refine our understanding of the personal dimension of leadership. We must also continue to extend our awareness of how chair behavior may be differentially affected by institutional factors such as departmental climate, organizational culture and support, and sheer size.

**References**

This Digest is drawn from : "Preparing Department Chairs for Their Leadership Roles," *New Directions for Community Colleges*, Number 105, Rosemary Gillett-Karam, Ed., Jossey-Bass: San Fransisco, CA, Spring 1999.

Filan, G.L. The Need for Leadership Training: The Evolution of the Chair Academy. (pp. 47-56).

Gillett-Karam, R. Midlevel Management in the Community College. (pp. 5-12).

Gillett-Karam, R. with Cameron, D.W., Messina, R.C. Jr., Mittlestet, S.K., Mulder, A.E., Sykes, A.E. Jr., & Thornton, J.S. College Presidents Examine Midlevel Management in the Community College. (pp. 37-46).

Pettitt, J.M. Situating Midlevel Managers' Training: Learning and Doing in Context. (pp. 57-66).

Spaid, R.L. & Parsons, M.H. Meeting the Millennium's Challenge: Leading from Where You Are. (pp. 13-20).

Spangler, M.S. The Practitioner's Guide to Midlevel Management Development. (pp. 21-28).

Smith, A.B. & Stewart, G.A. A Statewide Survey of New Department Chairs: Their Experiences and Needs in Learning Their Roles. (pp. 29-36).

Yamasaki, E. Understanding Managerial Leadership as More than an

The ERIC Clearinghouse is administered by the National Library of Education (NLE) and operates under OERI Contract No. RR93002003. The opinions expressed in this digest do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of NLE/OERI and no official endorsement by NLE/OERI should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE